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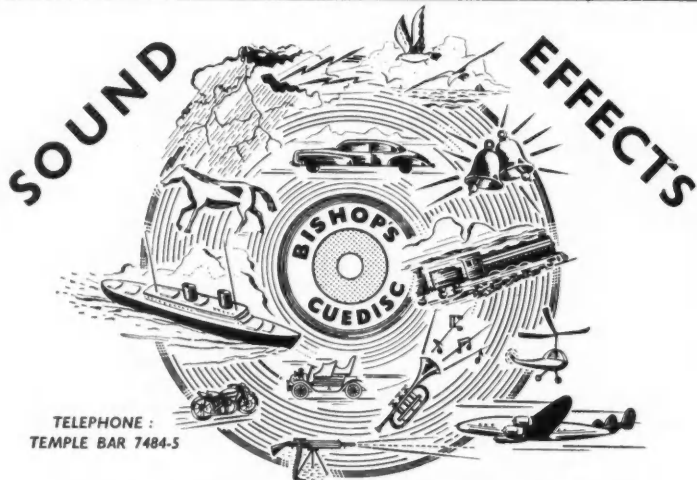
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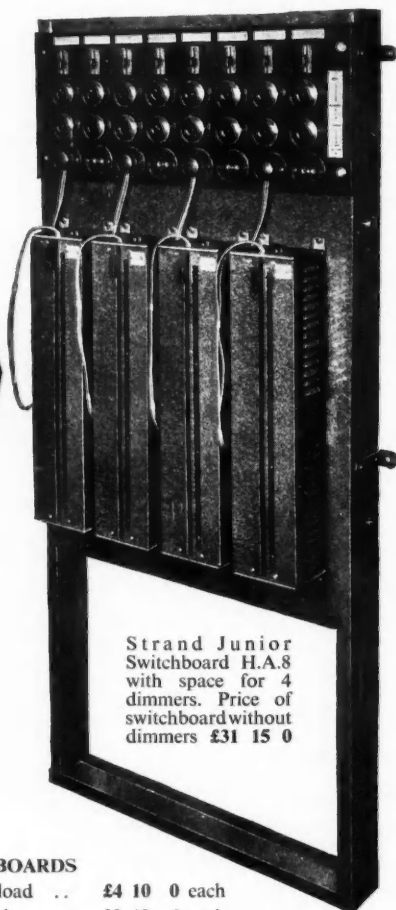
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The Quarterly Theatre Review

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AUTUMN 1955

NUMBER 38

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EDITORIAL

THREE international gatherings concerned with the Theatre have taken place in the last few weeks, and for two of them Britain has acted as host. The International Theatre Institute met in Dubrovnik and decided to found a "Theatre of the Nations" in Paris. If this bold scheme can be implemented, it will provide a permanent stage for the reception of companies from all over the world—an extension all the year round of the very successful Festival inaugurated two years ago by the City of Paris. Clearly, it will be easier to depend on a regular public for those already international arts, Ballet and Opera, than for straight plays in which the barrier of language limits the interest; but the Paris Festival has shown that this difficulty can be overcome.

In London, the young Society for Theatre Research staged a successful Conference to which it was fortunate enough to be able to welcome a very distinguished Soviet delegation. The twenty countries represented have agreed to form a federating Executive centred in Rome to correlate the work of research: and it is a sign of health in the theatre that the Conference specifically stated its conviction that the purpose of research was not academic nor antiquarian, but to assist the theatre of the present and the future to do richer and livelier work. Knowledge of the past is valuable mainly as life-blood for the creators of the productions that are to be.

Some delegates moved straight on to the Religious Drama Society's first International Conference at Oxford. Here it was heartening to find immediate agreement that drama comes first—that the artistic quality of play and performance must be a prerequisite of its claim to purvey a religious experience; and indeed, that the influence of Christianity upon writer and actor alike is rightly mediated only by presenting the play's human characters with the added depth and significance of a Christian understanding. Links and exchanges were also planned in this field, and the summer leaves behind it an impression of world-wide opportunities, for the use of which Britain has a major responsibility.

And yet—while exploring these foreign fields, have we not left the stable-door open for our own horse to be stolen? On the same front page of *The Stage* which reports the London Conference appear notices of two more theatres closing. The increase of television is certainly affecting provincial houses very seriously. Unless those who love the theatre remain steadfast in its support, the houses used by the living theatre outside London will quickly diminish to a handful; and nothing can take the place of these, the only training-grounds where an actor can learn his job from his true master and teacher, the audience. We must therefore regard the British theatre as being in a state of emergency, and assume special responsibility for it. We must keep on and on demanding of the Chancellor of the Exchequer that he remove the Entertainments Duty from the living theatre, for it makes the difference between life and death to the theatres which are most in danger. And each of us who is concerned with the theatre has a duty and obligation to keep on, week in, week out, personally supporting that theatre with our unfailing attendance.

"HENRY IV," Part I, at the Old Vic. John Neville as Hotspur and Ann Todd as Lady Percy in Douglas Seale's production. Designer: Audrey Cruddas. Photograph: Houston Rogers.

PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

By J. W. LAMBERT

NEVER disposed to expect too much of a hard world, I find two first-rate theatrical experiences, coming within six weeks of each other, an ample return on three months' theatregoing. And since one of these excitements was provided by the Old Vic I shall begin by celebrating their success; the more gladly because quite the most tediously unpleasant evening during the period under review I spent looking at some very half-baked acting in the Salle Richelieu of the Comédie Française.

After his success with *Henry VI* we hardly expected Douglas Seale to falter in producing *Henry IV*. In the event he achieved more than a straightforward success: he threaded through the staging of both parts not only an easy continuity but a deeply satisfying sense of wholeness. This was an England we could recognise—a land already old, battle-scarred, creased with idiosyncrasy yet still busy reshaping itself.

Although, on the whole, the permanent set and the costumes were not very successful, Mr. Seale so invigorated his players that court, battlefield, tavern and orchard sprang up readily in the mind's eye. Nearly all the smaller parts were neatly filled. Paul Daneman (whom we first saw as a striking Crookback from Birmingham) shrank himself enchantingly into a Shallow who muttered and fluttered with a spirit that rose well clear of conventional stage ancients. John Neville's Hotspur was perhaps only an echo of Michael Redgrave, but it was sharply done; and his Pistol was a splendid rubious rantipole.

Then consider how interesting Mr. Seale made the complicated relationship of the King and the Prince. Eric Porter's rather glum king was not a figure to be seen as majestically awe-

some; but Robert Hardy's Hal had to mingle respect, even affection, with his revulsion from his father's nagging, even when his impatience sends him darting off to the gutter. Quick, frivolous but not inane, repentant but not tediously neurotic, Mr. Hardy presented a figure perhaps less hypnotic than Richard Burton's version, but more interesting as a human being; and altogether easier to understand in his relationship with Falstaff.

Here Mr. Seale's production especially triumphed. The plays were never allowed to become merely a vehicle for the old fat man. Paul Rogers is not the actor to play a Falstaff of a weight to overbalance the play; as it was we could have done with a touch more authority in the big monologues. Yet this was a fine performance. The old man, of uncertain social status and wavering accent, slipping back through old age and bad habits, is, like Gulley Jimson, a vast repository of human experience, and Mr. Rogers missed none of it: hope renewed and hope again deferred, meanness and malice, greed and despair, cynicism, simplicity and common kindness—he kept all moods flowing, undaunted by all those whiskers, never toppling into buffoonery or sentimentality. Instead of disrupting the plays, turning them into a series of comic turns with tedious historical interludes, he linked them, touching life at all points, a Quixote without a creed.

Henry IV showed off the traditional English theatre at its best—thoughtful, dynamic and more than verbally poetic. Several other interesting productions mingled different strains—English, French, American—but somehow failed to combine them into living works of art. Most eagerly awaited, and perhaps for that reason the most disappointing,



"HENRY IV," Part II. John Neville as Pistol, Paul Daneman as Shallow and Paul Rogers as Falstaff. Photograph by Houston Rogers.

was *The Lark*, Christopher Fry's version of Anouilh's *L'Alouette*. It seemed to me when I saw this play in Paris that it was not the equal of *St. Joan*; it translates the legend into yet another case of the ardent spirit of purity and youth up against the complexities of worldliness. (The image, of Joan as a soaring lark, is surely borrowed from Claudel,

who elaborates a similar picture of *une petite croix véhémement* in *L'Annonce Faite a Marie*.) Yet there were noble moments in it, sustained by Suzanne Flon's earthy exaltation.

Few of them survived the passage of the Channel, but I doubt if the fault was Mr. Fry's. Dorothy Tutin seemed to be acting continually under strain.

Her radiance was all external, her despair effortful; and her intonations all too often lapsed into those of the twentieth-century upper-middle-class young woman. To make matters worse Peter Brook's production allowed—or it may be encouraged—the others to press dreadfully. None of them—Richard Johnson's Warwick, Laurence

his time), of Giraudoux' *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu*, fared hardly better as *Tiger at the Gates* in Harold Clurman's production. True, the play is not novel quite the fine thing it seemed in 1938. But it has some resounding rhetoric in it, and a good deal of witty interplay. This latter was sadly mishandled, the Trojan elders appearing not merely



"HENRY IV," Part I. John Neville as Hotspur and Robert Hardy as Prince Hal.
Photograph by Houston Rogers.

Naismith's Cauchon (who whirled round Joan at her trial as though he were a dancing dervish), Michael Goodliffe's Inquisitor, even Leo McKern's otherwise admirable Promoter, desperate to make others the victims of his own bad dreams—none seemed capable of authority without bellowing. The sum total was restless, dissipating tension, snapping emotional threads, ultimately dull.

Another of Mr. Fry's translations (we must hope that they do not take up *all*

wrong-headed but positively clod-hopping; and Helen was presented as a sort of East End corner-girl with second sight. The rhetoric, however, being largely in the hands of Michael Redgrave, survived magnificently. Only the big dialogue with Ulysses, which resumes a great deal of human folly, failed of its full effect; Walter Fitzgerald was for some reason got up to look like Hassan, and made matters worse by barking his lines like a hungry sea lion instead of rolling them out from stores



DOROTHY TUTIN as Joan of Arc in "The Lark" at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. Photograph by Angus McBean.

of disappointed wisdom. But nobility of body and spirit spoke out with splendour as Mr. Redgrave's Hector fought for peace; and then at last, in a moment of petty anger, opened the way for the others to rush into the war they were longing for.

The Arts Theatre has allowed a new generation of playgoers to see O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*. The old war-horse begins, it is true, to look more than a little quaint; and I was particularly struck, this time, by its welter of psychological anachronisms. Whole stretches of the dialogue between Orin and his mother sounded as though they might have been transposed from *The*

Vortex. But perhaps this was due to the singular lack of any policy in the matter of accents; these ranged from unabashed standard English through fairly convincing primitive American to Mummerzet. Accents apart, however, Peter Hall's production was incisive, highly atmospheric (i.e. suitably gloomy) and deliberate without being slow. What was slow, all too slow, was the changing of Paul Mayo's excellent but evidently too elaborate sets. Long waits spun out a long evening, and the players had all too often to start from scratch. Mary Ellis was blazingly hag-ridden as the erring mother; Anne Bishop's Hazel delicately

mixed bewilderment and determination; Ronald Lewis's Orin, the be-devilled son and brother, beautifully controlled his lowering desperation. I wish I could praise Mary Morris's Lavinia more; but her rigid stares, her slow turns, her baleful darts were so mannered, her sinister intonations so stereotyped, that her implacability became monotonous rather than impressive.

Another Arts Theatre production, *The Midnight Family*, by Charles Dorat, turned out to be a piece of imitation Giraudoux, in which Emrys Jones brought his boyish oddity to bear upon some laborious fantasy. Better value by far was Husson's charming, whimsical comedy (its whimsicality certainly not diminished in the version by Sam and Bella Spewack) *My Three Angels*. Three convicts save the situation in a threatened household; the setting is sweltering Cayenne, the time 1910. As two of the three convicts, George Rose and Nigel Stock caught with pleasing delicacy a strange, sad flavour of mortality. The third was played by Ronald Shiner, whose cockney high jinks, though subdued, were to say the least in the wrong key. The play suffered; but it is a good play. William Douglas Home's *The Reluctant Debutante*, with a *real* debutante in the title role, would hardly claim to be that. All the same it makes a cheerful vehicle for Celia Johnson, fussing snobbishly as a mother determined to launch her daughter suitably, and Wilfrid Hyde White, his usual deliciously dessicated self as a father who pays and sighs and turns up trumps in the end. An American frolic of much the same weight, *The Tender Trap*, enabled Brian Reece to look dashing and dashed at the same time, as a bachelor Fly, or not very fly bachelor. *The Remarkable Mr. Pennyfather* has some pretensions, hardly sustained, to toying with ideas, and enables Nigel Patrick to look dashing and dashed at the same time, as a rational bigamist back in the American 1890s.

One had hopes of Maxwell Ander-

son's adaptation of *The Bad Seed*, an American story about a woman understandably distressed to discover that she is the daughter of one wholesale murderess and the mother of another. But the play is roughly made, and although Diana Wynyard goes to pieces quite distractingly, and Miriam Karlin has an affecting moment of drunken distress, the acting as a whole varies from passable to appalling. A better American thriller, *The Desperate Hours*, pinpoints with dreadful realism the plight of an ordinary suburban household occupied by three escaping crooks. A multiple stage and a taut production bring the matter home; Bernard Lee as the head of the house poignantly conveys the shame of what seems to him his faintheartedness, and Richard Carlyle punches over a killer very effectively in the Actors' Studio or St. Vitus Dance school of American acting. The best-known exponent of this school over here is of course Sam Wanamaker, who briefly appeared in a version of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin* entitled *The Lovers*. As a failed artist turned clerk and murderer in nineteenth-century Paris, he gave an excellent impersonation of a small-time gangster in America during the 1930s, all bent knees, hanging head and twitches. Eva Bartok, however, got somewhere near the sensual silliness of Thérèse.

England—though the Society of Authors, unlike its agitated Parisian counterpart, has not yet demanded the partial suppression of imported plays—has contributed only one straight drama. Norman King's *The Shadow of Doubt* should have been good, and did in fact draw from John Clements an understanding performance as a physicist whose life is his work, who has betrayed his country once and is almost driven by frustration to do it a second time. But Mr. King's dogged progress towards a contrived, white-washing end disposes of any intellectual interest the piece might have had; and the staleness of his dialogue robs it of any emotional force.



MICHAEL REDGRAVE as Hector and DIANE CILENTO as Helen in "Tiger at the Gates" at the Apollo Theatre. Photograph by Armstrong Jones.

The sad thing is that this is a first play. Perhaps the line of conventional playmaking really is worked out. Where do we go from here? As I write the name of Bertolt Brecht is once again much in the air. Well, he is an expert contriver of theatrical moments, no doubt of it; he is also a didactic theorist of a most exhausting kind. But

I spoke earlier of two first-rate theatrical experiences. One was the Old Vic's *Henry IV*. The other is Orson Welles' *Moby Dick*, which in the manner of its presentation might be described as Brecht without tears. An emotional approach is not denied us; and to my mind this version of Captain Ahab's obsessed hunt for the white whale is



WILFRID HYDE WHITE with ANNA MASSEY in "The Reluctant Debutante" at the Cambridge Theatre. Photograph by Angus McBean.

one of almost continual excitement achieved with sombre brilliance.

The device of pretending that the whole thing is a rehearsal by an old touring company gets round all the practical difficulty of staging a whale-hunt, and might be made even more of if the parallel between the obsession of the sailor and that of the magniloquent actor-manager were a little underlined. Out of casual shabbiness grows wonder and a strange dread as the crew assembles. Simply as a piece of theatre-craft the suggestion of the deck of a ship, using a few ropes from the flies and a lamp or two, is wonderful; but it is much more than a successful trick—it provides all the imaginative stimulus that a realistic set would damp down; and how curiously the occasional droning of the soft harmonium touches in the hard puritan background of these sailors. The acting is sure and

clear, though Mr. Welles himself is perhaps not ideally Captain Ahab. Not because he is plump when Ahab should be skinny, but because in spite of his thunderous presence and tarry voice he is not cut out to sustain a big part. Even so, preaching, brooding, ranting, he carries the day. One scene, when in the seabound night the sailors off watch natter together and play the mouth-organ, while the one-legged captain stumps insatiably above them, irresistibly recalls the night scene before Agincourt in *Henry V*. And the final anticlimax, the return to the dusty stage and the rehearsing actors, is done with a tact which is itself an aesthetic pleasure. Despite one or two flat patches eye and ear are both enriched by sights and sounds that were never in fact there, only conjured up by stagecraft and good acting; and the mind retains the memory of a tremendous quest.

"THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"

By C. J. SISSON

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW is generally looked upon to-day as a play for groundlings, for the actor and for the box office, not for the critic (whether daily, weekly, or bookly) nor for the intelligentsia. Yet for Hazlitt, no mean critic, it was the only real "problem play" in Shakespeare. Dr. Johnson found it admirable in construction, and very diverting and sprightly. But the play has now, and for long, been under a critical cloud, scholar and critic vying in emulative rivalry of distaste, which has spread widely even into our schools, and is indeed becoming orthodox and established. One perfunctory notice of the 1954 *Shrew* at Stratford was chiefly taken up with a statement of the critic's dislike of the play as a brutal, revolting farce, not to be approved however performed, a simple excommunication of a work of dramatic art by a master. Strong protests have been made even against its use for reading in schools, as conducive to juvenile delinquency or at least to bad manners. Broadcast currency was recently given to a nauseous interpretation of the play as Shakespeare's revenge upon his wife, the mother of his three children, for her shrewishness (of which there is, of course, no evidence whatever).

André Maurois, in a recent article in a French newspaper,* declared it to be a capital fault in dramatic criticism to be governed by the fashions of the day and to neglect historical and general criteria. In this instance the prevalent moral and aesthetic distaste for certain plays of Shakespeare (for *The Shrew* is not alone in being under a cloud) derives largely from the fashions of yesterday. The weight of Victorian refinement and sentimental-

ism lies heavy upon us still. Such once popular guides to opinion as Morton Luce's *Handbook to Shakespeare* (1906) have exercised an influence traceable most unexpectedly, and ineffaceably, even in a world striving at all costs to be modern in its critical outlook, and Hollywood's idolatry of woman has joined hands with gallant memories in England of the Lady of Shalott.

The odd thing is that this seems to be a purely masculine reaction to the play. Actresses battle for the joy of playing Katherine, who is in fact the most spirited woman's part in Shakespeare, along with another Katherine, Kate Percy, and Beatrice in *Much Ado*, all young women with a marked leavening of shrewishness in their being. They are indeed young women of authentic Elizabethan vintage. The delight of the feminine part of the audiences which revels in the play is not all unthinking merriment. They emerge moved, thoughtful too, and questioning with themselves, especially the young married women, who somehow envy Katherine after all. It is astonishing to me that the plain facts of the play are obscured by blind prejudice. When the play opens Katherine is unhappy, at odds with herself and the world, discontented, *dépaysée*. When it ends, she is radiant and secure, mistress of herself, and is at peace with the universe. To consider the play as a mere farce, to play it as a farce, is plain *lèse majesté*, and reduces a true comedy to the level suggested by the title *Kiss Me Kate*, which in French becomes *Embrasse-moi chérie*, a Palais Royal title if ever there was one. But producers have gone against the tide of critical fashion, and Petruchio's whip, a feature of Restoration and later productions, no longer comes near Katherine.

* *Nice-Matin*, 22nd April, 1955

For the producer, the chief problem is the Induction, the setting of the main play in the framework of a performance by a travelling company before a Lord in his country house, as part of the Lord's elaborate jest upon a drunken tinker, Christopher Sly. It is also taken generally to be his only opportunity for originality, for the play in other respects plays itself and can hardly go wrong if the "book" is followed. The Induction, indeed, looms large in most productions and usurps upon the main play as an accompaniment and running commentary throughout. This arrangement, of course, presents obvious difficulties. Sly and his bed, the Lord and his servants, occupy part of the stage, which is thus denied to the play itself. (It is clear that the Elizabethan setting avoided this difficulty by using the upper stage or balcony stage for the Induction, as the Folio stage-directions prove.) Shakespeare's "book" provides nothing for them to say, and the yawning void is filled up with "business" which has to be invented to give them something at least to do. The result is, for the vast majority of audiences, a series of tiresome distractions from the absorbing and complex action of a tightly constructed play, and the intrusion of charade upon drama, a continuous obstacle to that suspension of disbelief which is dramatic illusion. There is obvious inconsistency in playing the Page's impersonation of a lady at the level of Belles in Battledress, for the servants of an Elizabethan Lord were often not untrained in playing, the Lord himself expressly trusts their capacity for acting their parts, and boys played women's parts on the professional stage. There is room enough for some finer distinction between the amateur actors (the Lord's men) and the professionals performing the main play. (Some distinction, as Mr. Glen Byam Shaw pointed out to me, is necessary to any thoughtful production.) Shakespeare's actors would have been capable of this, and his audience of appreciating it, as would indeed modern actors and

audiences. These problems arise only in the continuance of the Induction throughout the play and into an Epilogue.

It is well known that the authoritative text of the play, the text of the First Folio of 1623, gives no support to this continuance of the Induction throughout the action, or to the conclusion of the play in a final return to the Induction ending with the departure of the travelling company and the awakening of Sly. In the Folio, the Induction is a prologue-framework. After a brief comment at the end of the first scene of the play the characters of the Induction disappear for good from "aloft", where the curtains are drawn, and there is no Epilogue. The material for the continued Induction and for the Epilogue all comes from the text of the 1594 quarto play *The Taming of a Shrew*, long thought to be the source used by Shakespeare but now generally agreed to be a corrupt, pirated, improvised text of his play. There can be little doubt that the Induction as given in the quarto points, however imperfectly, to the original form taken by Shakespeare's play. Why then have the later Induction passages disappeared in the Folio text, which is so manifestly the true text, resting upon a prompt-copy? Explanations offered, such as a mere accident of the printing-house, or truncation to economise in cast for travelling, are very unconvincing. The Folio text gives evidence of revision during the history of the play before 1623, during the thirty years of its career since its writing in 1592-3. It may well be that the later parts of the Induction were cut for those very reasons which have here been urged against the continuation of the Induction in a modern production, as Benson cut the whole in his Stratford production. We may not unreasonably recall Hamlet's protest against the abuse of clownery interfering with the necessary business of a play. The cut was probably made upon a later revival of the play, if we accept the evidence of the quarto

as reflecting the original acting version. The comment at the end of the first scene of the play would then be an accidental survival, due to imperfect deletion in the "book" of the play. There are examples of such survivals elsewhere in the Folio. If so, the Folio text represents the final, approved, acting text of the play, restricting the Induction to the function of a Prologue but I see no reason for doubting that it was done by Shakespeare in consultation with his fellow actors.

If it is argued that the play as a whole is rounded off, the circle completed, by the Induction-Epilogue, it can be argued with at least equal force that its omission brings the play to an end upon a magnificent curtain, hard upon the climax of its action, and avoids an anti-climax, mainly in dumb-show, following upon the most awkward of intervals between the play and the Epilogue. Another attraction of the Epilogue is the opportunity it gives of dignifying the play with an esoteric interpretation as a commentary upon life and art, upon "the baseless fabric of a vision" caught and made permanent only by art. But I do not believe that this was in the early Shakespeare's mind. *The Shrew*, indeed, is recalcitrant to critical voyages of discovery, in the modern style, of new-found lands of Shakespeare. With Sly as a star part, again not without Chaplinesque touches of pathos and mystery, it becomes impossible in a modern production to dismiss him from the play after the Prologue. He must be amply provided for, and share the curtain. On Shakespeare's stage, I suspect, the part of Sly was doubled with that of Grumio in the revised version of the play. But this would perhaps offend against modern stage decorum.

We may well consider the function and operation elsewhere of a continuous Induction and Commentary upon a play enclosed within it. Fletcher's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* makes it clear that in such a

structure for comedy the principal interest naturally resides in the Presenters, to use the Elizabethan term, and that the intention of the play as a whole is essentially satirical, in this instance social satire allied with satire upon popular literary taste. To such an end the device is entirely suited. It is indeed an admirable vehicle for the explicit purpose. But the formula cannot be applied to *The Taming of the Shrew*. Whatever canons of dramatic art are brought into operation here as general and historical criteria, to use Maurois' phrase, they are those of romantic comedy. The play must moreover be judged in the light of some reasonable familiarity with the outlook and the principles of Elizabethan English society, with the life and the people of Shakespeare's day, with the world reflected in the play. Does anyone, even the most incurable survivor of Victorian romanticism, deny that *The Taming of the Shrew* has a happy ending, for Katherine as for Petruchio? The audience, at any creditable performance of the play, is left in no doubt after the curtain. It is as vain to plead that Katherine ought to be resentful as it is to urge that Isabella in *Measure for Measure* should not have been so fussy about committing a deadly sin. Marriage was a serious affair to the Elizabethans, as also to most Second Elizabethans. The marriage service which sanctifies it is still concerned with the future, with promises and undertakings. It is a sacred contract. "Marriage," said G. K. Chesterton, "is a duel to the death." And Shakespeare, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, shows how with two swordsmen worthy of each other's steel both, paradoxically, can win. I wish I could be as secure of the enduring happiness of Bassanio and Portia, of Ferdinand and Miranda, as I can of Katherine and Petruchio. To be able to think thus of the matter is evidence enough that the play is neither satire nor farce, but true comedy.

WILL BARRIE LIVE?

By W. A. DARLINGTON

IF, like so many hundreds of other people, you had felt impelled to write to Sir James Barrie during the last twenty years of his life—to demand his autograph or a five pound note, to ask him to write a preface to your book, let you translate one of his into Welsh, give you a part in his next play, or push your new sneezing cure for adenoids—the chances are that you would have received in return a polite letter of regret not from the great man himself but from his secretary, one C. Greene.

This Greene had in fact no corporeal existence, but Lady Cynthia Asquith in her book* has no difficulty in describing him. He was, she says, “an undersized, scared-looking little man with rimless spectacles and a protrusive, mobile Adam’s apple.”

Well, she should know, if anybody; for the truth was that “C. Greene” was her own *nom-de-plume*—and *plume* is exactly the word, for she could not type, and had become Barrie’s secretary chiefly because she had none of the ordinary qualifications for the job. Instead, she had the only qualification that mattered, of being one of the few people whom Barrie could bear to have about him for long at a time. He asked her to come and help him at their third meeting, and she accepted with some doubts and as an experiment. But the arrangement was a huge success, and altered the course of Barrie’s life as well as Lady Cynthia’s.

She tidied up his chaotic papers (finding in the process, to her horror, a bundle of uncashed cheques amounting to £1,700), and honestly earned C. Greene’s salary. Over and above that, she brought a note of gaiety into an existence that had grown too hermit-like. She brought old friends of his back into his orbit, and introduced

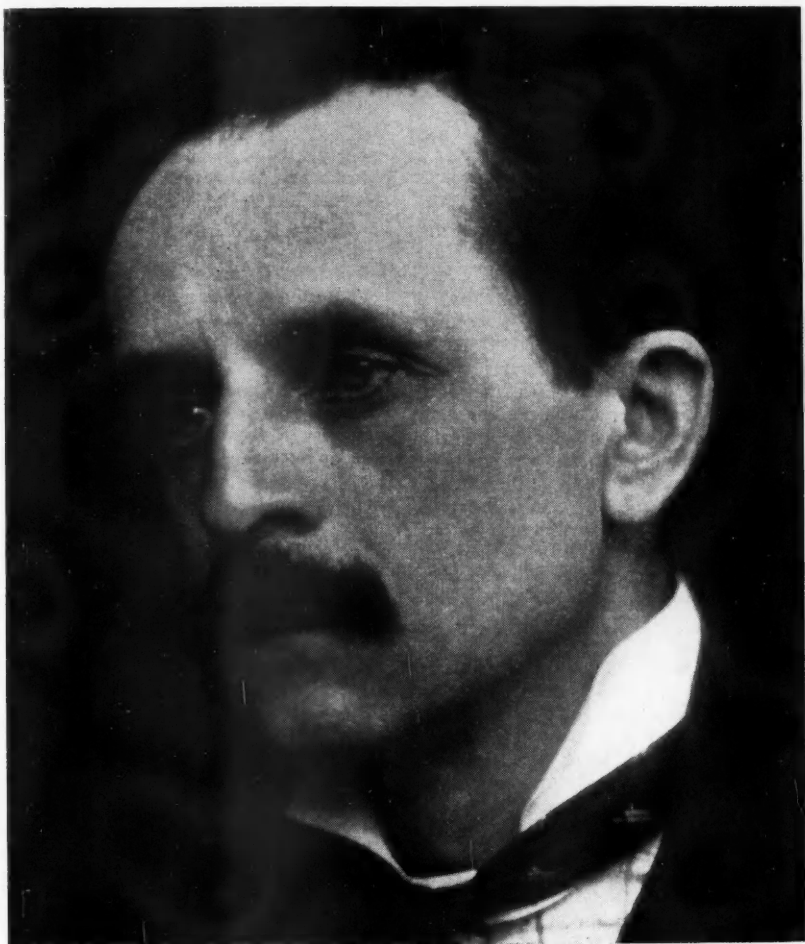
him to her own. She took him to her parents’ home at Stanway, in Gloucestershire; and later, when for a number of years he took a lease of Stanway every August, she acted as hostess. Though nothing could save Barrie from the fits of black unhappiness which engulfed him at times, his enjoyment of those summer holidays is delightful to read about.

All this means that Lady Cynthia knew Barrie in his later years as nobody else could know him. Also, since he left her all his copyrights (except, of course, the rights in *Peter Pan*, which belong to the Great Ormond Street Children’s Hospital) she has access to every kind of document. Further, she writes freshly and there is little doubt that if she had chosen to do it, she could have carried out Barrie’s own wish that, since there must be a definitive biography, she should be the one to write it.

That she chose instead to delegate this task to Denis Mackail, and has contented herself with writing a much smaller and more personal book, is due to a feeling which we may regret but must respect. Her post with Barrie was profoundly confidential. While he was alive he demanded of her absolute discretion; and now she cannot forget that demand, or his love of privacy. Obviously, to tell all she came to know about him through this special relationship would seem to her, even now, an abuse of confidence. If you are interested in Barrie, as I have been since I can remember, this means that you read her book with a slight sense of frustration, but with pleasure all the same, for within her self-imposed limits she has done it uncommonly well.

And what of the book’s readers? What interest—to put it crudely—can people be expected to feel in Barrie as a person now, 18 years after his death?

* *Portrait of Barrie*, by Cynthia Asquith. James Barrie. 15s.



SIR JAMES BARRIE

It seems to be a law of nature that a public character loses public interest very soon after death. Hamlet showed that this was so in Shakespeare's time by his bitterly ironical remark: "O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year." And we have seen by what has happened recently at Shaw's Corner that Hamlet was speaking not for his age but for all time.

On the other hand, neither Hamlet the elder nor George Bernard Shaw was in any sense mysterious during life, whereas Barrie was always an enigma. For many years he hid himself from the public eye; and although in his later years he plucked up courage to emerge from concealment and win fame as a speaker, the effect of apparent self-revelation was to deepen the mystery. What he told of himself in his famous speeches simply throws into high relief

his enormous reserve. It is possible therefore that, like Lawrence of Arabia, he retains as an unsolved conundrum a measure of public interest which, considered only as a great man of a bygone generation, he might by now have lost.

The answer to a casual enquiry at my local branch of a big circulating library goes some way to confirm this: "Oh yes, Lady Cynthia's book was very popular when it first came out—everybody wanted it. Now, of course, everybody's read it, so there's no demand." Allowing for a certain snob-value in Lady Cynthia's title this does mean that the interest in Barrie the man still extends beyond his devotees to the regular reading public. More could hardly be expected, after 18 years.

But the real question about Barrie is whether he will last as a writer; whether he has left behind him something imperishable for posterity to rediscover when the man is no longer a memory. Though in every case this kind of question can be answered only by posterity, it is possible with some writers to make a plausible guess at their chance of survival. In Barrie's case, anybody's guess may prove to be the right one, for his work is a strange mixture of preservative and corrosive elements. Salt is a preservative, and there is much salty satire beneath his apparent sweetness. Sweetness itself is a preservative, if it is of the right uncloying kind. But false sweetness, synthetic sweetness, the sentimentality which Barrie well knew was his besetting weakness ("that leering distorted thing," he called it in his self-denunciatory novel, *Sentimental Tommy*), is a powerful corrosive acid.

In everything that Barrie wrote for the stage we can find patches of corrosion, and it is probably true to say that all except the blindest of Barrie's admirers have the fear that these corroded patches will spread as time goes on, and obscure the merits of the rest. Lady Cynthia herself has this fear, and raises the question whether these patches could be removed now:—

Most of these questionable passages—those that make the queasy writhe, detractors crow—even some devoted uncomfortable—could easily be eliminated. Except for the play and the books about *Peter Pan*, I own the copyright in Barrie's works, so I could myself discharge this novel form of bowdlerisation. But the things which offend some are precisely those that most delight—even console—others; and who am I to judge?

Precisely. Who are any of us to judge, yet? Posterity must decide. Barrie is, in fact, still very much alive as a contemporary dramatist. The West End does not happen to have revived any of his plays just lately, except for *Peter Pan*, which is now partly a habit and partly a charity and cannot be assessed on its merits. But New York, which has not run *Peter Pan* to death, revived it recently with great success; and I am told that *What Every Woman Knows* has earned fabulous sums lately on an American tour. In this country the amateurs are as Barrie-conscious as ever, and that means very Barrie-conscious indeed.

For the literary critics, Barrie is down and out for the moment. *De mortuis nisi bonum* is not a proverb that has much validity in the literary world, where the evil that men do has a way of living immediately after them, leaving the good to be exhumed later. Consequently, Barrie's sentimentality is execrated, and the limpid clarity of his writing is forgotten. Yet the men who thought well of his writing in his own day were not always the kind whose opinions can be lightly tossed aside now. "Of course!" said Professor Sir Walter Raleigh when Lady Cynthia asked him if she should accept the secretarial job. "It isn't every day you're invited to help a genius." "Barrie's a beauty," said Robert Louis Stevenson in a letter to W. E. Henley. And George Moore's verdict was, "One of the most beautiful writers of English that ever lived." If these tributes were deserved, their truth should be rediscovered some day.

As to his plays, I find it difficult to believe that posterity will find no merit in *Dear Brutus*. Its construction is a

model for anybody writing in the three-act form, and the stagecraft of the first act is superb. The theme is universal and astringent, and the point—that only an exceptionally lucky human being would benefit by a second chance in life if one were offered—is firmly made. The characters, though mostly chosen as types to be satirised, have life enough in themselves to make them worth acting. The dialogue does not “date” in any tiresome degree and the manners and customs, as well as the dresses, are such as may well acquire in the far future a period charm.

Most important of all, perhaps, in this play Barrie only once allows himself to be betrayed into false sentiment. This is in the scene where Lob, having upset a vase of cut flowers, comforts the outraged blooms as he puts them back. This is whimsy of the worst type—for if Lob had really cared a button for the flowers’ feelings he would not have had them cut in the first place. Fortunately, the scene has no bearing on the rest of the play and can be omitted. Personally, I wish Lady Cynthia would use her power, and eliminate it once and for all from the text.

CAN PLAYWRITING BE TAUGHT?

By NORA RATCLIFF

WHY not? Acting can be taught, painting can be taught, music can be taught—unless all the Colleges and Academies are taking money under false pretences. And yet so often the would-be playwright is told: “My dear fellow, you can’t *learn* how to write plays. Either you have it, or you haven’t.” And, apparently, the only way of finding out whether you “have it” is to pester your local amateur groups, or squander your substance in riotous postage and stamped addressed envelopes, and, on the rare occasions when you receive more than a formal note of thanks and regret, to wonder how much encouragement should be read into remarks like, “Your work is very sincere,” or, “You have found an interesting theme.”

Playwriting, like any other art or craft, depends, of course, on a natural aptitude. Nobody would try to teach musical composition to a man who is tone deaf, or painting to someone with only just enough colour sense to recognise stop and go signals. The deluge of inexpert play scripts, so graphically described in Adrian Stanley’s recent article in *DRAMA*, is the result of a basic

fallacy in the reasoning of many of their anxious authors: “Plays are stories told in dialogue; dialogue is a reproduction of people talking, i.e. speaking English. I speak English; therefore I can write dialogue; therefore I can become a playwright.” The fallacy lies in the assumption that the dialogue of a play is merely “a reproduction of people talking.” An experiment with a tape-recorder concealed in any normal sitting-room will quickly dispel any such illusion.

Another reason for the thousands of indifferent plays is that the raw materials of playwriting are too easily come by; and I don’t mean merely pen, ink and paper. Most of us would hesitate before going out to buy nine square feet of canvas, priming, oils, brushes and so forth, with a vague idea that we might manage to paint a picture. But the words of our language are there for the using (and like most free commodities shamefully misused); “characters” are encountered every day of our lives; queer things, funny things, sad things happen to us all: raw materials of drama. Once more we set up a false equation, perhaps call

in Aristotle to support us: Dialogue plus Characters plus Story equal One Play. But, alas, they don't. We're still short of one factor. Mr. Somerset Maugham calls it "a specific knack." He goes on: "I do not know that anyone has been able to discover what this knack consists of. It cannot be learnt. . . . It is a faculty, like that of being able to play by ear, of no spiritual importance. But without it . . . you will never be able to write a play."

Now though this knack cannot be learnt—and even more certainly cannot be taught—it can be strengthened, developed and disciplined, just as the art master trains and directs a pupil's knack with a pencil, or the teacher of harmony develops and enriches a student's gift of improvising pleasant tunes on the piano. Perhaps this playwright's knack is most apparent in the writing of dialogue, and in the recognition of what is "theatre" and what isn't. Perhaps it depends to some extent on an ear for speech rhythms, on a ruthless logic in searching out the "heart of the matter" in human relationships; in discarding the non-essential, skilfully separating the bright clearly-shaped yolk from the dribbling, amorphous "white." The knack is an attitude of mind and a certain texture of thought. It has something in common with the poet, in the ability to think in images; something in common with the lawyer in the clear marshalling of facts and argument. It has a time sense all its own, belonging to a world where Iago can cozen Othello to insane jealousy, murder and suicide within three hours; where schoolchildren grow up, marry, are bereaved or buried between eight o'clock and ten-fifteen. It is a world of free imagination, yet bounded by the physical limits of the stage. Is it surprising that so many of our leading playwrights are actors?

It all looks so easy as we sit and watch the finished play—for no play is finished till living actors play it out before an audience. In an art gallery, or at a concert we can recognise that

the artist or musician is working in a form of expression quite alien to our own skill. But in the theatre Miss A. on the stage behaves exactly like Miss B. who lives next door. The scene at the breakfast table might have been lifted straight out of our own home. We leave the theatre determined to try this playwriting caper ourselves.

There are two sorts of people who go home and try: those who can recognise how far short of the hoped-for result their effort has fallen, and those who cannot. The latter immediately type out fair copies for agents, managers and editors. They will continue to do so in spite of all efforts to persuade them to concentrate on golf or knitting, so we must leave them to their fate. The former deserve closer attention, for they can be helped. In time they will probably learn the hard way, two steps forward, one backward. More than likely they have the coveted knack, but are stubbing their toes against the obstinate bedposts of plot construction, scene-shaping, interest-direction and undisciplined dialogue.

At this point one might be expected to drag in the word "technique" and close the argument with the bald statement that technique can most certainly be taught. But a good play cannot be written on technique, like pouring liquid cement into a prepared mould. Paradoxically enough, technique is of most service when the artist has become unaware of its employment except at moments of self-criticism or experiment. It is the language of any art we practise, and the playwright must learn to "think" in the language of the theatre as a good linguist thinks in French, German or Italian without mentally translating from his mother-tongue. It is in the learning of the idiom and syntax of this language that outside help can be of most use.

Only too often a reader comes across a play which has fine possibilities, but which has been written before the playwright has the skill to manipulate his plot, or, perhaps, to make his

dialogue smooth and convincing. The great pity is that even to the author himself the material will have become second-hand; by the time he has acquired the necessary skill the clumsiness of the original script may kill the urge to write the play. Hence the usefulness of learning the A B C of playwriting on unimportant material (the exercises in harmony of the student-composer, the improvisations of the young actor).

In these earlier essays it is possible to criticise construction, to point out digressions and non-essentials, to assess characterisation. Above all (or is this just my pet pigeon?) to show how the dialogue can be sharpened, pruned and whittled; how abstract ideas can be translated into concrete images; sen-

tences re-balanced, with the qualifying phrases tucked neatly away, leaving the actor with a good round phrase to end his speech.

But when all has been done that tutor and student can do in the back-and-forth traffic of scripts, the final test of a play must always be on the stage in front of an audience. Only here, in the theatre itself (and "theatre" must include the put-up stage in the school-room at Little Mugthorpe where local amateurs are giving their friend's play a try-out) can a playwright really learn his job. He will learn it from the actors—even inexperienced ones—from the producer, the stage-manager (probably the frankest in expressing his opinion!), and from the audience itself. They are all excellent teachers.

BY THE AVON—1955

By IVOR BROWN

OUR intensely star-conscious public will think of it as the Oliviers' year at Stratford, but I do not believe that Vivien Leigh and Sir Laurence would care for that view of it. Stratford is an institution and a co-operation, and they co-operated. I hear, as I expected to hear, that they worked devotedly with their team and their directors. There was no exhibitionism and much hard, well-shared labour.

It was generally felt that the opening with *Twelfth Night* was a disappointment; but it must be insisted, even to the point of boring repetition since the readers of criticism so rarely realise the fact, that first night performances may be largely different from (and often inferior to) those that follow. If Stratford gives fifty performances of one play during a season, then forty-nine audiences are seeing something which may be slightly varied every night—the mood of the audience always has

some varying effect on the playing—and something also which may be far better appreciated when the nervous pressure of the first night is over and the audience has come in a less icily critical mood. Subsequent playgoers have told me that *Twelfth Night* moved, when they saw it, with its proper warmth and gaiety, which it unfortunately did not do at the opening.

On that occasion Miss Leigh's Viola seemed strangely cold and detached. Viola is deeply in love: it is no good being "a perfect picture", which this actress could not fail to be, unless Viola is also a living person, very close to us in her strange adventure. There must be all the ecstasy and agony of young love from the very moment of the "aside" "Who e'er I woo, myself would be his wife." That urgency, on the first night, was not there: Miss Leigh had the partial excuse that her Orsino was also playing in a curiously detached and

ego-centric manner. His worship of Olivia was perfunctory. There was a chilly wind, instead of "the warm south", blowing through Illyria.

As Malvolio, Sir Laurence created a most exact picture of the mean fellow with an itch for power. Choosing a slightly foreign accent and an ingenious make-up, he gave us an unusual, a haunting, and a pettily tyrannical steward. He denied himself the flourish, the flaunting pride, the over-weening arrogance that are usual in this role. With a brilliant realism he worked out his own conception of the menial in ascendancy: instead of over-weening, he may be said to have under-weened. As a result, he not only disappointed those who came expecting a wonderful essay in flamboyance: he also gave the baiters of Malvolio too small a target for their anger, their trickery, and their mockery. Surely the plot demands that a vast, spectacular pride should fully earn its fall: and here was something on a smaller scale, fascinating in detail, but inadequate to the story of the overthrow.

Sir John Gielgud's direction gave the clowns little help. Alan Webb was oddly cast as Sir Toby and the richness of that genial toper was missing. Doubtless warmth accumulated with a warmer audience than the judicial assembly a first night provided. The stammer and titter of Michael Denison's Aguecheek were more acceptable and Malcolm Pride's scenery gave us "scenic Shakespeare" with something of the old splendour that Illyria evoked before economical austerity became a hard necessity; Leslie Bridgewater's musical arrangements were charming, true to period and not marred by the harsh modernism which, so busily avoiding tradition, often jars and disconcerts by its insertion of astringent noises at which I am sure Shakespeare would have shuddered.

Macbeth on the other hand was a triumph. Miss Leigh came right into her own with the cold, imperious drive of the queen to be: she gripped her

part as firmly as she gripped the crown: tenacity was manifest and humanity not lost. Rarely does one feel in this play that Macbeth and his lady were lovers before they were criminals. This time we knew it.

The part of Macbeth is a long-distance race, and Sir Laurence, not over-straining himself at the start, ran it with perfect timing and a Chataway finish. Here the skill of the film actor, who has to develop his facial play in minute detail, was married to the energy of the stage actor, who must use more vehement methods. The change of mood from aspiration to desperation and the collapse of the bodily man from eagerness to exhaustion were most vividly apparent.

The physical agility of the close was matched by the fullness of meaning which Sir Laurence, without possessing Gielgud's vocal range, evoked from the music of Macbeth's part: we were never allowed to forget, amid all the flourish and alarums, that Macbeth is the most poetical of Shakespeare's malefactors, with as much beauty on his lips as blood on his hands. Glen Byam Shaw's production was direct, swift, and practical. There was plenty of the ghastly and the ghostly, and the fighting "smoked with bloody execution". But spectacle never held up the story and there was no tiresome presence of those "new angles" for which producers, over-anxious to be original, are apt to strive. Keith Michell's Macduff, Ralph Michael's Banquo and Maxine Audley's Lady Macduff, all excellent in their kind, reminded us of the company's strength.

Anthony Quayle came in, most welcome, to play Falstaff in Glen Byam Shaw's justly vigorous handling of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and it was good to have Angela Baddeley back upon the stage. Joyce Redman, her colleague in these revels, had her principal opportunity of the season as Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Bertram was Michael Denison's largest role, and both players could

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IVIVIEN LEIGH as Viola and LAURENCE OLIVIER as Malvolio in the Ring Scene from "Twelfth Night" at the Memorial Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 1955 Season. Photograph by Angus McBean.



LAURENCE OLIVIER and VIVIEN LEIGH in "Macbeth".

Photo: Angus McBean.

be called more courageous than lucky in facing the challenge set them by this perplexing play. It was surely an act of Bardic piety to include it, for once, in a season's programme and it was an act of providence to engage M. Andreu to cover its bareness of dramatic interest with the gay gallantry

of Caroline trappings.

Miss Redman paid so much heed to the melody of her lines that she obscured their meaning: Helena is a singularly tough young woman who goes out to get her Bertram with all the single-mindedness of a Shavian man-hunter, which may be one reason

why Shaw has been a lonely champion of the play. Miss Redman, charming in aspect and sing-song in speech, gave us more prettiness than firmness of purpose. Michael Denison was as believable a Bertram as could be: it was not his fault that one can only believe in Bertram to be repelled by him.

Keith Michell's Parolles was tightly restrained comedy: if the part is given more rein, there can be little harm in the pursuit of laughter. This sour comedy cannot be played for credibility. Alan Webb's King was delightfully in the picture: he could have stepped from the walls of a Vandyck Room in a National Gallery. Rosalind Atkinson brought grace and charm to the most gracious and charming of Shakespeare's senior ladies, the Countess of Ronsillon. But no distinction of acting on the fringe will bring grace and charm to *All's Well That Ends Well*, a title never supported by any generation of Shakespearean playgoers.

With Peter Brook's production of *Titus Andronicus* Stratford achieved a masterpiece of salvage. Headed by Sir Laurence Olivier the company became a rescue-party and, by showing the utmost skill in concealing the crudities and absurdities of a blood-soaked melodrama, they actually persuaded the audience that here was tragedy itself and not the travesty of tragedy. The play abounds in physical horrors and must, to please the 1590 public, whom we know that it greatly pleased, have emptied buckets of blood. With great cunning Peter Brook has made amputation seem almost anaemic and yet not ludicrously unreal. As an essay in getting away with murder, on a dignified level, I have seen nothing like it.

To this feat Sir Laurence contributed greatly with the veracity of his performance as Titus, the veteran Roman general whose single act of barbaric cruelty brings a flood of barbaric revenges on his head. It is obvious to the reader that Titus foreshadows Lear and Sir Laurence gets full tragic value from the fine speeches in the part; the

gnarled and crusty Roman dwindling into madness is made an unforgettable figure of senile ruin.

My only complaint is that Brook, in order to let the action run, has cut some of the few exquisite lines in which the stripling Shakespeare signed, with his own hand of glory, his share in the text. This cutting bore hardly on the part of Marcus, played with a moving firmness and rich quality of voice by Alan Webb. A most valuable share in the rescue-work was contributed by Anthony Quayle as the malignant Moor, Aaron, whose wickedness is so colossal as to invite laughter: the performance had such vigour and sincerity that derision was impossible. Vivien Leigh suffered Lavinia's unspeakable wrongs with the right grace while Maxine Audley was splendidly satanic as Tamora, Queen of the Goths and mistress of the Moor.

What a fortunate dramatist is Shakespeare that so much thought and talent should be devoted to covering up the raw nonsense of his nonage and exhibiting so richly what little merit *Titus Andronicus* contains! The entire company deserved medals, if not for saving life, at least for saving reputation.

Correspondence

Dear Sir,

I have just learned that the threatened Opera House, Cheltenham, where I did my first playgoing, is to be saved by municipal purchase, and will be kept as a theatre. Cheltenham already has its own Civic Playhouse, mainly a centre of amateur activities; it is surely a unique distinction for any British town to have *two* civic theatres, thus uniting the two aspects of drama. This reflects great credit on the Council and its officers. Since Cheltenham has annual festivals of contemporary music and literature, this town, once chiefly known as a sleepy home of the elderly where life was always afternoon, has changed its habits, while vigorously developing other industries than education. As an old Cheltonian I must express my pride in this new energy, and suggest that the town's old motto of "Salubritas et Erudito" should now be altered to "Artes, Salubritas et Erudito".

Yours sincerely,

London, N.W.3.

IVOR BROWN

AMATEUR AND PROFESSIONAL

*We end our series of articles celebrating the
Golden Jubilee of Gordon Craig's "The Art of the Theatre"
with a message from Mr. Craig himself.*

ONCE was a professional; I had but one profession which was that of actor. But after eight years of that, eight years taking a weekly salary of £7, I became all sorts of things—in fact an amateur. I was a lover of all sorts of things; that is the meaning of the word amateur. I did make a little money this way, but it was very little, for people don't like paying amateurs.

Slowly I emerged, as the worm does from the soil, creeping up the tree at the edge of the lake; slowly sprouted wings and then off I flew, and became an artist, or so it seemed. Yes, I too; for I ceased to bother about my case. I shed my shackles, threw away my top hat to a cabby, my bowler to a tramp. I kicked off my boots and found myself in sandals, not in London or Paris or the big cities, but in Forte dei Marmi, Alassio, St. Ambrogio near Rapallo—yes even there in spite of the marked disapproval of my dear neighbour Max, who took no notice!

So to all appearances I was at last an artist, though not a professional one, for I gathered that no artist has a profession, except on the sly. So on the sly I took to being a maker of book-plates (some money); a journalist (some more money); a wood-engraver (a bit more money). I set about doing these side-shows, as it were, somewhat in the manner of a professional.

Then, as you know, I fell to becoming a stage reformer (on the sly of course). The professional reformer is a bore; people wonder why he fiddles around reforming these or those bits of a machine or an institution, which may or may not need repairing,

instead of blowing up the whole caboodle. It is only when they see that it *pays* to fiddle in this way that a glow of admiration burns in them and they too take to "reforming" bits and push them on the market and coin money—with the bore's notions.

But believe me I was never serious enough (in a trade way) about my reforming. "Bits" did not interest me. I left them all to Messrs. A.B.C. to tinker with. I wasn't seriously interested because I had listened to the words of command "Oh, reform it altogether." You may recall where these severe words occur and who it was wrote them; you will have heard actors by the score repeating them in the old play. Yet, strange to say, the audiences and critics who heard them with you in hundreds of theatres have paid not the slightest attention. For had they done so the stage would have been reformed *altogether* as Shakespeare ordered. And it has not been.

So I, going with the stream and not wishing to offend millions of spectators and thousands of critics, nodded my head up and down as they did and struck out that awful word "altogether," concluding that Shakespeare had not known what he was talking about, and I contented myself with seeing far more sense in the First Actor's diplomatic utterance: "I hope we have reformed that *indifferently* with us." Thus was I (on the sly) truly professional, continuing to practise what makes imperfect.

But for very many years now my role of *professional* reformer has been over and done with, and the greater

thing altogether is destined to come along in a stretch of years—for the organised mild reforms and professionalisms all fade away, while a big Dream recurs again and again till it becomes in years the reality. And it seems to me that this big thing, the Dream, is what you have—you of the Drama League, members and non-members. You are amateurs—lovers of theatricals—of theatrical dramas and actings and the rest of it.

Why I use the old word "theatricals" is that it seems to me that it is the larger word and contains the smaller ones—"drama-player," "scene-producer," and so on. The theatrical is all that belongs to a theatre (it is as simple as that) whereas a drama can be un-theatrical and yet be a good thing—good reading; for example Henry James's drama and many intellectual plays are untheatrical. Much that is delightful about the intellect can and does often creep into a dramatic piece and improve a stage play; when it does more than sidle in, when it pushes in, then it spreads to the right and the left and the theatrical is dried up by this powerful absorbent, and I am sure that is not a good thing to do to the theatrical. Don't the spectators and auditors become restless, being but lovers of the theatre and nothing more?

Lovers all the world over will know what I mean—will know that I don't mean that thinking, cool quiet thinking, is a nuisance; anything but that, since in fine intense feeling there is plenty of

room for thought, and thought, with feeling whirling free as air, is all Dream.

So what I have been inadequately trying to say is that the professional is all right, but that the amateur is better, for the amateur is the lover and loves the whole, and is often lost in it. The professional, cured of love, is—well—almost a lost being, and concentrating on technique develops tricks—two or three at most. With these he makes lots of money and proves how right he was to be as professional as possible.

In the other arts (as in theatricals) far more worthwhile amateurs are to be discerned than successful professionals. For who troubles his eyes to search for or linger over the paintings, music or buildings of men so fatuous as to wish to paint, compose, or build merely for money. Did any of the great artists, the good artists, do that? I have read the lives of these artists and it seems they were just as human as the rest of us, and enjoyed life and its expensive luxuries as many of us do, but they don't seem to have worked "down" to the buyers—they even forgot their existence.

Now we theatre folk, amateurs as well as the others, cannot forget the buyers—for there they sit row upon row of them in front of us and we play to them. Exactly. But we need never play *down* to them, and we can be happy to know they would not like us to do so. For while we theatrical workers are amateurs, they, the spectators, are amateurs too.

Wm. D. Howells
1955

THEATRE BOOKSHELF

American Pioneer

George Pierce Baker and the American Theatre, by W. P. Kinne. Cumberlege. 48s.

It would be no cause for surprise to learn that very few English playgoers had ever heard of George Pierce Baker. What is surprising is that the same would hold true for the American playgoer. Though George Pierce Baker occupied a significant role in the development of American drama his contribution is now virtually forgotten by the younger generation of American critics and students of the theatre.

To remedy this lapse Wisner Payne Kinne, Assistant Professor of English at Tufts College (U.S.A.), has written a comprehensive and readable biography. The book is not only interesting in itself but may serve as a reminder of certain useful facts about the American theatre. That a reminder should be needed is in itself illuminating as to the character of that theatre to-day.

George Pierce Baker was the first to institute a course in playwriting in an American university. Among his students at Harvard's "47 Workshop" in the years before America's entry into the First World War were such playwrights as Edward Sheldon (author of *Romance*), Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard, Philip Barry, and others connected with the theatre like the critic Heywood Broun and the scene-designer Lee Simonson. Later at Yale he founded the first fully equipped School of Drama at a great American university. This Department of Drama is still in operation.

At a lecture in 1899 Baker said: "There is no American drama and never has been. There is no American audience to insist that drama is an art; that acting is an art." These statements were almost wholly justified for there was at that time no drama of American conditions which might have permanent value. Baker was a pioneer in promoting the idea that the theatre is an art relevant to the life and spirit of the people to whom it is addressed. "What we need," he said, "is the skilled portrayal of life from a close study of it."

Due in some measure to his propaganda, practical example and instruction, the American drama he envisaged has come into being, a drama which now stands honourably with the contemporary drama of any other nation. Why then should Baker's name seem a dead letter to all but a few specialists? The answer is important to those who care for the health of the theatre as an instrument of artistic and social expression. For the theatre in any society is constantly in danger of losing its force by being absorbed in the chaos of the entertainment business.

There is nothing shameful in the fact that the theatre in modern times has become a business, and it is surely a truism that there need be no incompatibility between good business and an artistically flourishing theatre: the opposite view, though fallacious, is much easier to argue. It is essential, however, to realise that these two aspects of theatre—the theatre as trade and the theatre as a humanly significant expression—are not at all identical.

Tradition, study, standards of craftsmanship are of slight consequence for the theatre as business; they are essential to the theatre as an art. All that show business needs is a paying audience; but for the theatre as a vehicle of culture, the manifestation of a people's aspirations, what is required, besides talent, is the devotion and disinterested appetite which reveals itself in study and thought, in arduous and consistently prolonged work.

That the prosperity of show business is distinct from the fulfilment of the theatre's real purpose may be adduced from the example of the English and American stage to-day. The complexion of the Broadway show business at the present moment is relatively rosy; it can hardly be said to suffer from lack of talent in any of its branches. But the theatre has not become deeply rooted in the national consciousness. There are now very few theatres anywhere in our country outside of New York and there is very little audience.

Of England, I speak not simply from my own observation but on the testimony of my friends in your theatre. Though the West End boasts almost twice as many playhouses as Broadway, and the London managements clamour for more (all of which proves a certain degree of prosperity) the number of sound plays seriously reflecting contemporary British life, the number of attempts to write and produce such plays, even when compared to the period 1900-1940, is alarmingly small. One of the reasons for these dangerous signs in both countries is the lack of a body of critics, students and teachers of enlightened and articulate opinion. These are the people who create taste, knowledge, understanding and enthusiasm for the theatre in the widest and profoundest sense. Baker was such a teacher.

His main emphasis was on the work of the dramatist, but he understood that the dramatist is central only as he functions within the theatre's whole context, and he therefore insisted that his classes in playwriting should be integrated with the operation of an entire theatre apparatus—building, stage, mechanical equipment, a company of actors and an audience. Yet because it was playwriting that he taught, and because his reputation rests on that teaching, it seems to me proper to

pose the questions: can playwriting be taught, and should it be taught on a university level?

In countries like England and America, there are few permanent companies, no national stages, no accredited centres of concentrated and continuous practical instruction in playwriting, acting, scene-design and lighting. The activity of our commercial theatres is precarious, desultory and accidental. In such a situation the kind of instruction Baker espoused and exemplified becomes almost mandatory to safeguard the maintenance and extension of these crafts of the theatre. To say that *conservatoires* of art and schools of drama are futile because many great men never attended any is about as sensible as arguing that preventive medicine is useless because many people have lived to a happy and hoary old age without it. Baker's phenomenal success may be due to his own great gifts as a teacher, but it is also the proof of a great need.

HAROLD CLURMAN

Shakespeare with Prologue

Rasser of Alsace, by L. A. Triebel. C.U.P. 30s. **Nature in Shakespearean Tragedy**, by Robert Speaight. Hollis & Carter. 15s. **The Slave of Life**, by M. D. H. Parker. Chatto & Windus. 18s. **The Merchant of Venice**, by William Shakespeare, ed. John Russell Brown. Methuen. 15s. **Komeo and Juliet**, by William Shakespeare, ed. John Dover Wilson and George Ian Duthie. C.U.P. 15s. **Shakespeare Survey No. 8**, ed. Allardyce Nicoll. C.U.P. 18s.

A fitting prologue to a group of studies of Shakespeare is offered by Dr. Triebel's delightful piece of research into the work of an Alsatian exponent of the European tradition of school and university plays, a tradition which in sixteenth-century England bridged the gap between the interludes and the full flowering of Elizabethan drama. Rasser of Alsace, a parish priest and a schoolmaster, reminds us that modern ideas of the educational value of school drama are not so modern after all. He wrote plays to be acted by his pupils, and went so far as to have them printed, with lively woodcuts that provide useful indications of sixteenth-century methods of stage production. The plays were highly moral, they showed how "well-trained children attain great and honourable rank, whereas others, badly brought up, often perish and die a shameful death"; they were nevertheless designed to "add joy to school life", all the boys had a part and public performances were given for the delight of proud parents. This able and well-documented study shows also how the plays reflected the spirit of the age.

It seems a far cry from these narrowly moral pieces to the infinities of Shakespeare, and the two studies next referred to make it seem even farther. They are enquiries into

what Shakespeare thought—always a hazardous approach to one who inevitably expressed thought in terms of other men's minds. One of the great greatnesses of Shakespeare is that his matter can never be separated from his medium; those who ignore the stage miss the man—and the thinker. Studies in his philosophy and theology may well fall into this trap, but Mr. Speaight's, as one would expect, steers clear of it. With the humility and respect which he finds inherent in Shakespeare himself he denies that his book is a work of scholarship, but he nevertheless brings to his study the integrity of a scholar strengthened and vitalised by that of the man of the theatre. He claims that the word "nature", recurrent as it is throughout the plays, is Shakespeare's "point of departure", and then, working on the basis that Shakespeare had no coherent theology, examines his view of the universe as manifested by the relation between man and nature in the great tragedies, thus expanding Mr. Danby's recent study on the same subject, and providing interesting, sometimes provocative, explanations and interpretations of Shakespeare's dramatic design. The juxtaposition of reason and nature, whether in antithesis or harmony, seems, one would agree, to be the nearest clue to Shakespeare's system of thought, which surely always works by way of apprehension rather than comprehension. One is particularly grateful to Mr. Speaight for his observation that "religion in Shakespeare has the ancient meaning of a thing that binds; lust is a thing that looses"; in the light of this everything falls into place and the centre holds.

Miss Parker does not quite avoid the trap. She does not, for instance, see, as Mr. Speaight does, that the rottenness in the state of Denmark exists only in the sick mind of Hamlet. In defining Shakespeare's metaphysical values and his idea of justice she too sees nature to be the clue, together with grace; she makes a useful point in placing Shakespeare's attitude to Christianity in its contemporary perspective and finally, on the basis of much circumstantial and internal evidence she reaches the conclusion that Shakespeare was a "Papist in sympathy and doctrine." But where is Will Shakespeare? Through the mists of admirably minute analysis and analogy with mystics, theologians and philosophers he seems dimly discernible, with a smile on his face, murmuring, "There are more things in heaven and earth . . ."; and still keeping his secret. However, another of the greatnesses of Shakespeare is that any serious research, in whatever direction, into his works, will produce something of value.

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Merchant of Venice appeared, and much water has flowed under academic bridges since then. The controversial and difficult text of *Romeo and Juliet* in the New Shakespeare edition is honoured by the hands of two scholars, Professor Dover Wilson having enlisted the collaboration of Professor Duthie, and at particularly knotty points the footnotes bear the signatures of both.

The eighth volume of *Shakespeare Survey* is devoted mainly to work on the comedies, and as usual draws upon scholars from all over the world, preserving a healthy balance between Shakespeare in the study and Shakespeare in the theatre.

MARJORIE THOMPSON

European Theatre

Gerhart Hauptmann, by Hugh F. Garten. *Boices and Boices*. 6s. **The Origin of the Theatre**. An essay by B. Hunnigher. Columbia University. Batsford. 29s.

It is a curious fact that Hauptmann who is so well known in Germany, author of some forty-four plays, whose life-span is roughly the same as Bernard Shaw's, is almost totally unknown in this country. His first play, *Before Sunrise*, won him fame at the Freie Bühne in Berlin as long ago as 1889, while his two last plays, completing the Atreides cycle, *Agamemnon's Death* and *Elektra* were published as recently as 1948, two years after his death. Within this period an enormous creative activity led to a continual outpouring of dramatic, poetic and prose works, that were acclaimed in Germany but somehow never reached England. To be exact, *Who's Who in the Theatre* records one production of *The Sunken Bell* (his most popular play) in 1907 and two productions of *Hannele* in 1904 and 1908. Even the enterprising Maddermarket Theatre did not include Hauptmann among the seven German authors whose plays were presented at Norwich between 1911 and 1936.

The English playgoer has therefore had little opportunity of judging Hauptmann for himself and his gratitude is all the greater for this admirable summing-up of the poet's work by Dr. Garten in the series "Studies in Modern European Literature and Thought" issued at Cambridge. Here in a small, neatly-arranged book, lucidly written, with a useful appendix giving biographical dates, list of published works and translations, is the first really authoritative account to appear in English of the life and work of this unknown but famous poet-dramatist. And now it must be confessed that with Hauptmann it is not only a language barrier that we have to contend with but the difficulty of a particular mode of thought with a strong mystical element, which may well have roots in the primeval forest where Odin was once worshipped. It is no accident that one of his most powerful plays is called *Darkness* and that a strong vein of symbolism runs through some of his most realistic, or as

we used to say "naturalistic", plays about the Silesian peasantry whom he loved, and who were the background of so much of his best work. As the years passed, the mystical element increased and there were no more comedies like *The Beaver Coat* (1893), still so popular with the German repertory theatres.

To have threaded his way through, round and about these forty-four plays, giving the gist of their content, style and purpose in so short a book is a great achievement. It has been done by sorting out the various strands in Hauptmann's make-up, differentiating between the Naturalism and Romanticism of the nineties, which he sometimes came back to, notably in *Before Sunset* (1932), and the Hellenism and Mysticism, mostly of a later period, which made him a difficult author for export. Reading this book makes one long to see the plays performed in the theatre.

During the war, Hauptmann remained at his home in Silesia for he had his roots in that soil and would not move; but by a curious irony of fate, within a few days of his death his homeland ceased to be German.

The Origin of the Theatre fascinates and compels even before one reads a word. Beautifully printed in the Netherlands it has forty-eight illustrations, many of masks, which have been chosen from all lands with the greatest care, to explain the text. Professor Hunningher believes that in the folk-plays disseminated throughout Europe is to be found the origin of the theatre and that the death of the old year, celebrated in the New Year and Easter plays, in which bringing-back-to-life is the important feature and signifies the return of Spring (one remembers St. George and the Nine Worthies) was utilised by the Church for its own purposes from a very early date. In this well-documented book is to be found a mass of folk-lore, and much for the medieval scholar as well, for it was under the shelter of the Medieval Church that "theatre" as we know it came into its own.

JANET LEEPER

A New "Lysistrata"

Lysistrata, by Aristophanes. An English version by Dudley Fitts. Faber 12s. 6d.

The theme of *Lysistrata*—the revolt of women against war—was surely Aristophanes' most brilliant and original inspiration. But how lamentably he wasted it to satisfy his audience's demand for violent physical action and the endless iteration of the all-too-obvious joke. There is not here a fraction of the wit that went into *Acharnians*, *Birds*, *Clouds*, or *Frogs*; and hardly any of the poetry. Yet the comedy remains immortal, though unactable. Unactable (in any faithful sense) simply because we are not ancient Athenians; and immortal, because the theme strikes roots into the bedrock of our common human nature.

Must we add, untranslatable? Mr. Dudley Fitts deserves credit, at least, for having done

no more than was necessary to clothe original nakedness in the essential minimum of decent garments. His version is faithful, unevasive. As such, more suited ostensibly to the needs of the reader than the player, does it gain or lose by its approximation to the style of modern musical burlesque? Here is the crux of translating Aristophanes—how to avoid producing something which looks like a modern skit on ancient life. Mr. Fitts is aware of this pitfall, and he has been careful not to overdo the use of "modern parallels" in political catchwords and so forth. But the flavour of to-day is strong in the idiom and rhythm, especially of his lyrics, which make difficult reading in cold blood and set the reader mentally composing tunes for them in order to find out how they should be scanned.

Mr. Fitts thinks it unlikely that the version will ever reach the stage; but he writes with the contemporary stage in mind, and the result is an Aristophanes reconstructed in our own image rather than discovered as he is. I know of no translation that successfully overcomes this difficulty, and I by no means grudge a welcome to this modern-dress Aristophanes; indeed I hope that somewhere there is a stage and an audience capable of proving Mr. Fitts's expectation wrong.

E. F. WATLING

Long Plays

Kean, by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Kitty Black. Hamish Hamilton. 10s. 6d.

I am sure that many people will be as eager to read this play as I was, sensing that a collision between two such masters of diablerie as Sartre and Kean must produce the biggest theatrical sensation since Kean himself appeared as Shylock in a red wig. So it is disappointing to find that this is an adaptation of a play by that old theatrical war-horse, Alexandre Dumas the Elder, from which Sartre has effaced himself so successfully that nothing remains but a big rambling, shambling, ill-constructed piece of mummery full of theatrical effectiveness and histrionic gestures. The heaven of Sartre's famous philosophical attitude wholly escaped me, but if it is to be found in the recurrent discussions on the nature of illusion and reality—and has there ever been a play about an actor which didn't fiddle about with this cliché? One must point out that very nearly the last word on this subject was written by a near contemporary of the elder Dumas, G. H. Lewes.

But surely it is all highly actable? Of course. Sartre wrote the play as a "vehicle" for Pierre Brasseur and there was a time not so long ago when reports of Brasseur's tremendous performance amounted almost to a legend. One wonders whether the success could be repeated in London. (It would be thrilling to see Redgrave in the part.) Miss Black's translation runs smoothly enough for the most part, but left me doubting whether

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it rose to the big occasions; or, in other words, whether it gave the actor the chance "to plaster his emotions on the back wall of the theatre" (in the words of my great grandmother), and yet give us the impression of the absolute reality of the scene he is playing, which is surely the recurrent miracle of the actor's art. Dumas, like Bulwer Lytton, was a dab at turning out dialogue which may not deserve study in School Certificate, but which is splendidly actable. A lesser text, and the greatest performance tends to degenerate into *ham*. The present version seems to lack devilry. But I would like to be proven wrong by a production in English.

JOHN ALLEN

Love and Lunacy, by Peter Philp. Garnet Miller. 7s. 6d. **Price of Fame**, by Wilfred Massey. French. 4s. **A Guardsman's Cup of Tea**, by Thomas Browne. Evans. 5s. **Mystery at Blackwater**, by Dan Sutherland. French. 4s. **The Bishop's Bonfire**, by Sean O'Casey. Macmillan. 8s. 6d. **Love and Miss Figgis**, by Stella Martin Currey. French. 4s. **Man Maid Mischief**, by Barbara Van Kampen. Deane. 3s. 6d.

Love and Lunacy, a brilliantly witty satirical comedy which received the Peter Ustinov award in the British Drama League Original Full-length Play Festival, achieved the further distinction of professional presentation at the International Festival at Edinburgh, 1954, where it had an enthusiastic reception. The action covers a vast period of time, beginning in 11,000 B.C. in the mythical island of Atlantis and ending in the remote future when the moon has become colonised by humans. The gods figure prominently throughout. Poseidon is a most engaging fellow whose matey confidences to the audience provide much of the fun. But much of the satire is topical. Mr. Philp has a deft touch which seldom flags. If it is neglected by the commercial theatre, it is to be hoped that repertory and amateur companies will see that the public have opportunities to enjoy this entertaining piece. (4 m., 2 w., 1 set.)

The central figure in *Price of Fame*, Laurence Montfort (spelt Montefiore for short) is a megalomaniac who has achieved fame in radio and television solely on account of his unflinching rudeness which, since he is also a misogynist, has brought him an immense following of female fans. The play is well written and the characters are all interesting. The dialogue is witty and does not depend on wisecracks. Judicious weeding of Laurence's speeches, where they transcend too much the bounds of credulity, would do no harm. There are production notes at the end of the play. (4 m., 5 w., 1 set.)

A Guardsman's Cup of Tea is a bright little comedy for three men and two women, with one simple setting. The dialogue is well written and the situations are very amusing. All the male characters are guardsmen—one

officer and two other ranks—consequently the players should be fairly tall. Also Guards uniforms are needed, but this should not present much difficulty. The book includes a Note to Producers as is usual in Evans' plays.

It is a little surprising that Wilkie Collins, who always strove to give a dramatic setting to his stories and participated in the theatricals organised by Dickens at Tavistock House, and even presented there dramatised versions of some of his works, should never have turned his masterpiece, *The Woman in White*, into a play. The task has been left to Mr. Dan Sutherland and he has performed it in a very workmanlike manner under the title of *Mystery at Blackwater*. Needless to say, there is no lack of dramatic tension. What the play does lack is a relief from the grim atmosphere so characteristic of Victorian melodrama, but that is no fault of the dramatist. (4 m., 7 w., 1 set. Prologue could be played in front of curtain.)

It would be wrong, even for a devoted admirer, to expect that every work of a great dramatist must necessarily be a masterpiece; nevertheless it is difficult to believe that Sean O'Casey's latest play could have come from the pen which enriched the theatre with such works as *Juno and the Paycock*, *The Plough and the Stars* and *The Silver Tassie*. In so far as it has a theme *The Bishop's Bonfire* is mainly a gibe, sometimes humorous sometimes bitter, against formal religion in darkest Ireland. Act I is occupied with slapstick which becomes rather tedious by repetition. Acts II and III have their moments when flashes of the old brilliance are evident, but the final scene is contrived somewhat after the manner of a good many not very distinguished thrillers. Although Mr. O'Casey is no longer a young man, one rejects the idea that his hand has lost its cunning. No doubt he derived a good deal of fun from writing this play, but the theatre is not so rich that it can afford to have his great genius dissipated.

A note on the title page of *Love and Miss Figgis*, which was presented by the Colchester Repertory Theatre in 1951, states that it is The Arts Council Prize Winning Play. It has an interesting theme which propounds the question whether a brilliant classical scholar should sacrifice an entry to Oxford in order to marry a young man of very inferior education and doubtful prospects with whom she is passionately in love. The play is well written and constructed and all the parts are worth playing. (6 m., 5 w., 2 sets.)

Man Maid Mischief is a short three-act play for eight women. The ingredients include a well-meaning, addle-brained mother, her daughter Jill, an American, charming and sophisticated (between 25 and 50), a very pompous unpleasant person with a plain daughter who has a lisp, Grandma, very talkative and deaf, and a daily help of any age. The play centres round a mistake of the

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A. H. WHARRIER

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DONALD FITZJOHN

Useful Books

Browsing among books for dramatic societies overseas I came across a number which I should like to recommend to societies here who are starting or replenishing their own theatre libraries, or indeed to anyone actively concerned in the theatre. These books are not listed under "Drama" nor were they written with a theatrical purpose in mind. All are exceedingly well illustrated and should prove most helpful.

Costume Jewellery by Peggy Tearle (Studio, 3s. 6d.) was the first book I found. "Costume jewellery" is meant in the modern sense—that is, heavy, chunky jewellery. But the very size and weight of the materials used, and the ingenious suggestions for materials, make for an easy adaptation to stage and period jewellery. Sink grates, S-hooks, hardware chains and curtain rings amongst other items provide the basis for many a fine piece. In a few cases specialised ingredients may be needed and the addresses of stockists all over the country are added. The book is cheap enough to make one hope that we shall have soon seen the last of "fruit gums stuck onto tape"!

Dress Design by Elizabeth Wray (Studio, 15s.) is one of the clearest of books on the cutting out of clothes with a pattern; on adapting the patterns to individual needs, and also on block-making (that is—for the uninitiated—the art of making your own patterns). Provided this book has been understood, the two costume books from the Victoria

H. R. and Albert Museum, 17th and 18th Century Costume (7s. 6d.) and 19th Century Costume (5s.) will be of great value. Each contains nearly a hundred clearly printed illustrations, and short notes provide explanations. So here we have the shapes of clothes, wigs, hats and accessories available to all. These are lovely books to possess and with their help even people who usually hire their costumes will have increased knowledge of their requirements.

The V. & A. booklet on *Elizabethan Embroidery* (2s.) has very good photographs and even shows some of the fabrics worked into the original garments. On all illustrations the motifs and textures are clearly recognisable and should provide inspiration to those who paint their own materials, thus not only saving money but gaining in period feeling.

Armour (V. & A., 2s. 6d.) should be helpful on special occasions, particularly the sketch-book drawings of the old armourers which supply details of the separate pieces and give a good idea of their actual fastening together. In the photographs the shapes, textures and embellishments are easily seen. This book should encourage people to think beyond the habitual cardboard with a splash of aluminium paint.

DOROTHEA ALEXANDER

Revised Edition

Stage Lighting, by Frederick Bentham. Pitman. 37s. 6d. (2nd Edition Revised.)

Mr. Bentham has spent his lifetime in the research for and invention of better means of lighting the stage, and has had much valuable experience in putting the fruits of his labours to use. His book is a first-class textbook for those who wish to learn about the theory and use of all the means available for lighting the theatre, the concert hall and the arena and platform stages. He is an idealist who would have every hall and theatre equipped with the best possible apparatus and his contribution to the art of lighting in the theatre is immense.

JOHN SULLIVAN

Plays Received

HEINEMANN: **The Teahouse of the August Moon**, by John Patrick. 8s. 6d. **The Wind of Heaven**, by Emlyn Williams. 5s.

FRENCH: **As Long As They're Happy**, by Vernon Sylvaine. **The Wooden Dish**, by Edmund Morris. **Waiting for Gillian**, by Nigel Balchin. **The Facts of Life**, by Roger Macdougall. **The Pet Shop**, by Warren Chetham-Strode. **Trial and Error**, by Kenneth Horne. **Winter Journey**, by Clifford Odets. **Dial M for Murder**, by Frederick Knott. 5s. each.

EVANS: **A Question of Fact**, by Wynyard Browne. **Keep in a Cool Place**, by William Templeton. 5s. each.

METHUEN: **The Lark**, by Jean Anouilh (trans. Christopher Fry). 8s. 6d.

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RUTH (Biblical), by FRANCES JANES 4m. 3., Drama

WIDOW OF EPHEsus (from the "Satyricon"), by VINCENT GODEFROY 3m. 2f., Drama

HER CHIEFEST STRENGTH (Elizabeth at Tilbury), by RUTH CRAUFORD 5m. 6f., Drama

NO EARS FOR THE BEAR (In occupational therapy ward), by ADELAIDE HERIOT 2m. 5f., Comedy

CLONAGH THE KING (The Irish Kings), by NORMAN HOLLAND 4m. 3f., Tragedy

THOSE REBEL POWERS (The aged Mary Fitton), by DORIS MAJOR 2m. 2f., Fantasy

BLUE ARE THE HILLS (The Prodigal Daughter), by RAE SHIRLEY 2 m. 2f., Drama

A BORDER INCIDENT (Siege of Berwick), by E. J. MITCHELL 2m. 2f., Drama

FOOTSTEPS IN THE DARK (Moorland cottage), by E. BRUCE ASHTON 2m., 2f., Comedy

HENRY THE NINTH (Modern "Henry's" surprise), by DINNEN and MORUM 2m. 7f., Comedy

NO FAN FOR MY GRAVE (Traditional Chinese), by WENDY ST. JOHN MAULE 2m., 3f., Drama

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BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NEWS

The Festival 1954-1955

The Twenty-third National Festival of Community Drama Final, which took place at the Scala Theatre, London, on Monday, June 20th, was notable for the double triumph of the Llyn Safaddan Players from Brecon. This small company, which since 1952 has made three appearances at the Welsh Area Final and two in London, not only won the Lord Howard de Walden Cup with *Davy Jones's Dinner*, written and produced by T. C. Thomas, but also the Original (One-Act) Play Award, Mr. Thomas receiving the author's prize of ten guineas and the company the Geoffrey Whitworth Cup. It will be remembered that this author-company combination also won the Original Play Award in 1954 with *Davy Jones's Locker*, of which this year's play is the sequel. A lively production with some excellent teamwork, enhanced by an engaging central performance by Jack Walters as Davy Jones, the signalman-cum-poacher, marked the ultimate success of the Llyn Safaddan Players. This was the fourth succeeding year in which Wales has been represented in London by a T. C. Thomas play.

Winners apart, the Final lacked originality and variety. Certainly the three adjudicators—André van Gysegheem, Adrienne Allen and T. C. Worsley—could not be envied their task of selection from so limited a range. They chose for second place Durham Dramatic Society (Northern Area), in *Ye Gods!*, by Wilson Barnes, and awarded third place to the Wheatsheaf Players of Coventry (West) in *Birds of a Feather*, by J. O. Francis. The evening's programme was completed by the Huntly F.P. Dramatic Club (Scotland) in *Still Waters*, and Sleaford Little Theatre (East) in *Ladder For Lucy*, both by Delsie Darke.

New Plays

Before the main adjudication, Ivor Brown, the League's Chairman, presented the awards to the winners of the Original (One-Act) Play Award and the Festival of Original Full-Length Plays.

Runners-up in the Original Play Award were Norman Holland with *Clonagh the King* and Rae Shirley with *Reasoning of the Heart*. The judge (Nora Ratcliff) also commended *Sister Martha's Miracle*, by Barbara Clegg; *The Copper Kettle*, by Margaret Wood, and *Wine, Women and Wrong*, by Rae Shirley.

In the second Festival of Original Full-Length Plays the adjudicator, Frances Mackenzie, saw eleven new plays in various parts of the country, and was struck by the quality of some of them. First prize went to the Questors of Ealing for their production of *Fanfaronade* by Rodney Diak; the producer,

Barbara Hutchins, was at the Scala Theatre to receive the £25 award which goes to the winning company in this competition. The Questors will, however, be unable to present their play in the League's Theatre Week in September, and that honour will go to the runners-up, the Ormesby (Yorks) New Theatre Group, in *Hunter's Moon*, written and produced by Ruth Pennyman. This will be shown on Wednesday, September 7th, at Southlands College, Wimbledon.

Earlier Stages

In most respects the National Festival during the past season did not deviate from the pattern or scale set some years ago: 757 companies took part competitively (a slight increase over the previous year) entering through twenty-one B.D.L. and thirty-eight associated preliminary events. The most notable additions to Stage One were civic festivals in Bristol and Coventry, both districts in which the Festival has for several seasons been dormant, and a hopeful resurgence of B.D.L. activity is noted in Northamptonshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire, where local committees are instituting new and vigorous policies of development. In Northumberland the experiment of linking the local youth festival finals with the Northumberland-Durham divisional final at Whitley Bay, using the same theatre, date and adjudicator, seems to have achieved success, as have the numerous "post-festival" sessions of discussion with adjudicators, teams and audiences.

Area Finals broke new ground in two centres. The Western Area moved its Gala Final this year to the attractive Jephson Gardens Pavilion, Leamington Spa, and despite the railway strike drew large audiences to hear Michael MacOwan adjudicate, while the Northern Area packed the Arts Centre in Doncaster on May 21st, where Richard Ainley was the judge. The other two Areas remained faithful to well-tried theatres: at the Coliseum, Aberdare, on May 21st, with Stanley Hildebrandt adjudicating, Wales had, as usual, to turn away numbers of enthusiasts, and the Eastern Area organisers discovered new interest in their Final which was held at the Scala Theatre on May 23rd. Norman Marshall judged this event.

The names of all Area finalists are given in the programme of the National Final at the Scala, copies of which may be had on application to the B.D.L. Festival Secretary.

The continuance of the activities noted, and more particularly the immense interest and support shown this year in the later stages of the Festival, illustrate the very great debt which the League owes to its voluntary committees in all parts of the country for their



DILYS SAMUEL, STEVE RODERICK and JACK WALTERS in a scene from the winning Festival play, "Davy Jones's Dinner". Photograph by John Vickers.

unflagging, arduous and invaluable work. To them, and to the organisations and societies which have supported the Festival, the League expresses its sincere gratitude.

New Developments

The 1955-56 season will see the most significant change in the National Festival since the introduction of the New Plan seven years ago when the early stages were expanded by the inclusion of numerous county, theatre guild, and other local events which now form an integral part of the Festival. Now the Final itself is to be increased in scope, imparting to the Festival a new and international flavour. Agreement has been reached with the Association of Ulster Drama Festivals, organising body for the new one-act play festival in Northern Ireland, to send its winning company to play at the Final at the Scala in 1956.

From Scotland, the company sent to London has been the highest-marked B.D.L. member in the Scottish Final. The League and the Scottish Community Drama Association have now approved measures which will permit the unconditional appearance of the Scottish Festival winner. The way is therefore clear for a full-scale "British Isles" Final to the Festival.

In keeping with this development, the Scala Theatre next season will see two finals in one

instead of the single event. In a matinee session, judged by one adjudicator, the English finalists from the Eastern, Western and Northern Areas will appear, and from these will be chosen the representative company to meet the Scottish, Welsh and Irish finalists in the evening "international". The Howard de Walden Cup will be awarded to the winner. The date for this first combined event is Saturday, June 16th, 1956, with Stanley Hildebrandt as the English Final adjudicator.

Marking Procedure

Last season, the National Committee for Community Drama, accepting the recommendation of the Whitsuntide Festival Conference, decided to announce letter-categories to entrants instead of marks. This was regarded as an experiment, and the Committee has revised arrangements for the coming season in accordance with the experience gained. It found that most teams felt they suffered from not knowing their own marks, since these give an exact guide to, at any rate one adjudicator's evaluation of, their achievement. On the other hand, the letter categories helped to fix the standard of assessment; and it could be of real value to each team to know how its standard compared with that of others who have played with it. The Committee has

therefore decided that during next season:—

Each team will receive its own marks under each of the four headings of the marking system. They will accompany a written report at every stage of the Festival.

Each team will have also a list of all entrant teams in its own festival placed according to the letter categories, A (excellent, 75 and over), B (good, 60-74), C (fair, 40-59) and D (below 40).

Next season, also, the section of the marking system "Endeavour, Originality and Attainment" which hitherto carried 15 marks, will be divided into three separate sections of 5 marks each.

Overseas Visitors

Visitors from overseas are always welcome at Fitzroy Square, whether they call socially or to seek assistance. The League's Overseas Committee, which has been extending its influence and activity over the past few years, now plans to make the welcome a little more positive. It is arranging to give two receptions at Headquarters to theatre enthusiasts from other lands, one at the beginning and one at the end of the coming season. The first will be on Thursday, September 29th, at 4.15 p.m., when members of the Committee and representatives of the theatrical profession will meet to welcome an invited party of students starting work with colleges and universities in Britain. The second reception will be in mid-July, 1956, and will cater for the short-term holiday visitor rather than for the student. Again members of the British theatre will be present, and it is hoped that all interested in the theatre who are visiting this country next year will ask the Overseas Secretary for further particulars.

For Young Enthusiasts

A hundred and eighty young people have signified their desire to join the Junior Drama League. Its purpose is to give them the chance, as individuals rather than in school or youth group, to acquire knowledge to match their enthusiasm for the theatre. Activities will be in full swing by the Christmas holidays—for this is a holiday League—in the new rooms at 10 Fitzroy Square. Most of the prospective members had a "private view" of the *Drama in Education* Exhibition with which the rooms were opened, and they ask for talks on theatre history, criticisms of their own plays and discussions on problems arising out of their own school productions. They will have special library facilities.

The holiday courses for young people run by the Training Department in connection with the Christmas Holiday Lectures will continue as usual.

Teachers will be interested in a new course on School Drama, also at 10 Fitzroy Square, which takes place on ten Wednesday evenings, beginning September 28th.

NOTABLE PRODUCTIONS

Gloucester

T. S. Eliot's great play *Murder in the Cathedral* was written for performance in the Chapter House at Canterbury twenty years ago. Since then it has sufficiently demonstrated its lasting power to move lay audiences in the theatre. But does it do so in quite the same way? I saw Martin Browne's original production when it came to London late in 1935, and when I saw Robert Helpmann's fine revival at the Old Vic two years ago the question presented itself again. So the opportunity of seeing Martin Browne as Becket in his own production of the play in Gloucester Cathedral in July was not to be missed.

In the theatre, it now seems to me, Becket's loving kindness becomes translated into a kind of warm-heartedness that we more easily recognise. The dramatic result is that we feel his death mainly as a loss. Martin Browne in Gloucester Cathedral—I do not know how to divide the credit between them—made me feel the "otherness" of the saint who has conquered self, who is no longer a "character" in the usual theatrical sense. His death left me in the dark until, as the women of Canterbury passed into the darkened choir in slow procession after Becket's body and received lighted candles, conviction flooded in that only the martyr's death could have lighted those lights by which the women walked through the gloom. This finale was not merely an appropriate processional solemnity. It was the consummation of the whole dramatic poem in a visual image that could have sprung only from an intimate and creative understanding of the poet's purpose.

Martin Browne elicited a high standard from the local amateur actors who supported him. The leader of the chorus of women spoke her lines memorably and in a fine contralto voice. One had a few minor criticisms to make of the production but they do not much matter. The important thing is that Martin Browne should be murdered in as many cathedrals as possible during the next two or three years.

ROY WALKER

East Ham

From June 29th to July 2nd the County Borough presented the East Ham Drama Guild in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* in the Water Garden Central Park, East Ham. The Borough must be congratulated in encouraging and financially aiding its local dramatic talent; the Drama Guild must be commended for its courage not only in undertaking one of Shakespeare's most difficult plays, but in performing it in the open air, thereby doubling its difficulties.

It must be said at once that Philip Vennis's

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production achieved a remarkable degree of success. It was swift, lively and inventive, and showed a real understanding of the themes and conflicts of this great tragedy. None of the performances rose to great heights, but the young Antony and Cleopatra made up in sincerity what they lacked in years and stature, speaking the verse with notable clarity. Enobarbus, Caesar and Pompey also brought the same quality to their playing, and there was skill and intelligence in many of the smaller parts, notably Mardian. Shakespeare (and how rare this is) was the real star of this production.

It is hinted that the County Borough may assist the Drama Guild of East Ham to make themselves a permanent home, which should set an example to other Local Authorities.

DONALD FITZJOHN

Bradfield and Bryanston

Two public schools have Greek theatres, and both have profoundly affected the life of the school. Bradfield's is over fifty years old, and the recent production of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* by David Raeburn, a young producer new to the Greek form, stands as a worthy successor to a great tradition. The transformation through suffering of the aged Oedipus, conferring a mystical benison upon his city of refuge, Athens (herself already racked by suffering when the play was written), emerged with a power that proved this a great religious drama.

Bryanston's Greek Theatre, built by the boys and staff and completed only two years ago, housed the Christian drama of which Sophocles gave so striking a foretaste. *The Chester Mystery Plays*, in a version shaped very much like the one used at York, were presented as a 3½-hour cycle for four performances. A multiple setting was built into the Greek stage; Mr. T. F. Coade's production was inspired by York but was full of original and often felicitous invention. What was most striking, however, was the clarity and force of the speaking and acting, especially of the "good" characters. The occasion was made memorably impressive by the vigour and forthrightness of the conviction which evidently lay behind the acting of these boys and girls (the latter from the sister school of Cranbourne Chase). The Chester script, being the least elaborate, the most direct and simple of all the English medieval dramas, was ideally suited to them. Mr. Coade dared to present the Crucifixion at length, and Anthony Gee, whose authority in the part of Jesus increased steadily throughout the performance, fully justified the venture. The production would have benefited by tightening up, especially between scenes; but this is a minor criticism of an achievement which those who took part in it and those who saw it alike will long remember.

E. M. B.

THEATRE IN AUSTRALIA

These are stirring days for the professional theatre in Australia. To-night (July 18th) the Old Vic Company after a ten weeks' Sydney season playing to crowded houses will open in Brisbane, where it is eagerly awaited. In Sydney, Googie Withers and John MacCallum (an Australian by origin) are already presenting *Simon and Laura*, and for Wednesday week, the first night of the Richardson Season when the new Elizabethan Theatre opens its doors, all seats have been booked in advance. A prologue to the play will be declaimed by Dame Sybil Thorndike, whose notable part in keeping the Australian theatre alive dates back to the thirties; on this occasion her young granddaughter will be in the cast.

B.D.L. (Aust.) was glad to perpetuate the memory of its late President, the Hon. H. S. Nicholas, by subscribing for a row of seats in the refurbished stalls. The auditorium will be adorned by a chandelier, the gift of a firm whose headquarters are in Melbourne—a generous gesture which acknowledges the national scope of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust.

The Trust is now forming its own Drama Company, which will tour all States, and whose personnel, like the Federal Cabinet, will include representatives of all States. It proposes to bring outstanding players from overseas on occasion, and has announced a visit from Judith Anderson.

The Victorian Drama League acted as host to a Conference held in Melbourne, May 16th to 18th, successive sessions of which were chaired by its President (himself an entrepreneur), a Director of J. C. Williamson Ltd., and our President, Mr. Colin Badger, who as Director of the Victorian Council of Adult Education has done such magnificent work both in sending professional drama to country centres in Victoria and in helping V.D.L. to get established. Members of the Conference came from all over the Commonwealth and from New Zealand. During the week it was possible to see the three Terence Rattigan plays then running as well as the opera with Italian singers taking leading roles. At the session at which reports from States were given, as Hon. Director of B.D.L. (Aust.) I surveyed amateur theatre not only in New South Wales but also in Queensland, the only State without direct representation. Professor Alexander flew over from Perth to read a paper on governmental aid for the arts.

It is of interest to note that V.D.L. has in the last few weeks received a grant of £500 from the Victorian Government's Cultural Fund, and that the Council of Adult Education has with State aid acquired an old church building whose main hall will make an excellent little theatre for amateur performances.

British Drama League (Australia) decided

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Women left alone and sensing impending trouble with the Mau Mau, fight out their personal problems in an atmosphere of tension.

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at its Annual General Meeting on July 15th that the time had come to seek incorporation under that title. And after such a feast of professional drama it is now turning its attention to its Seventeenth Festival of Community Drama, which we pioneered in November, 1939, soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, and have managed to keep going annually ever since.

E. M. TILDESLEY

REPERTORY ENTERPRISE

Some of the plays given their first production during the second quarter of 1955, compiled from material chiefly made available by Spotlight Casting Directory.

AMERSHAM Playhouse. *My Dear Master*, by Winifred Gérin. 6 f., 3 m. Charlotte Brontë's Belgian romance.

BARNSTAPLE, Devon Festival. Theatre Workshop in first English production of *Mother Courage and Her Children*, by Bertolt Brecht. Life of a camp follower in the Thirty Years War. 4 f., 10 m.

BRISTOL Old Vic. *You and Your Wife*, by Denis Cannan. 3 f., 5 m. Domestic comedy set in converted fort on South Coast.

CHATHAM, Theatre Royal. *Diamonds are Dangerous*, by Edgar K. Bruce. 4 f., 3 m.

GLASGOW, Citizens Theatre. *The Sell Out*, by Robins Millar. 5 f., 5 m. Comedy of the drapery trade.

GREAT YARMOUTH Repertory Company. *Second Honeymoon*, by Bernard Box. 4 f., 5 m.

GUILDFORD Theatre Company. *Heart and Heritage*, by James Lansdale Hodson. 4 f., 7 m. Set in Lancashire cotton town.

LEATHERHEAD Repertory Company. *Happy Returns*, by David Waller. 3 f., 3 m.

LIVERPOOL Repertory Company. *The House of Benedicite*, by Gwen Larwood. 4 f., 9 m. Merchant Stapler's house in Yorkshire, 1470.

LYTHAM ST. ANNES Little Theatre. *Murder in Fashion*, by Aileen Burke and Leone Steward. Wife of dress-designer is released from prison just before husband's first fashion show. 6 f., 4 m.

NORTHAMPTON Repertory Company. *Indoor Sport*, by Jack Perry. 3 f., 3 m. Comedy set in New York apartment. First performance outside America. *Happy Memories*, by Gertrude Jennings. 6 f., 3 m. Sussex 1900.

NOTTINGHAM Playhouse. *Footsteps in the Sea*, by Henry Trece. 2 f., 9 m. Vikings and Christians on Northumbrian coast, Spring 840.

NOTTINGHAM Theatre Royal. *Beat the Panel*, by Billy Thatcher and Rolf King. Based on panel game on commercial television. 2 f., 9 m.

READING Everyman. *The Cactus Garden*, by David Campton. A sister gives her life to looking after her family with no reward. 4 f., 2 m.

RICHMOND Theatre. *A Girl in Rome*, by David Waller. 3 f., 3 m. *The Keys of Love*, by Rita Harrison. 5 f., 2 m. *Love's Enchantment*, by Valerie Wyngate. 3 f., 3 m.

SHREWSBURY Repertory Company. *Don't Keep Lunch*, by Richard Lancaster. 4 f., 5 m.

WORTHING Theatre Company. *The Dazzling Hour*, by Anna Bonacci (adapted by Nancy Mitford). 8 f., 6 m. Sophisticated comedy, nineteenth-century France. *The Sound of Murder*, by W. Dinner and W. Morum. 3 f., 3 m. Thriller set in Cornish cottage.

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Drama by Janet Allen.
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Play by Christopher Bond.
CONSPIRACY AT THE GRAYFISH
Country Comedy by L. G. Baker. (6m., 7w.)
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Melodrama by Jack Last.

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THE ONLY PRISON (8w.)
Drama by Patricia Brooks.

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Comedy by N. Gattney and Z. Bramley-Moore.
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PLAY PRESENTATION IN THE AMATEUR THEATRE II

IN the Spring of 1919, the Travelling Theatre of the Arts League of Service, under the direction of Eleanor Elder, set out upon the road for the first time, its object being to introduce theatre art to the truly rural England which existed in those days. The players and all their equipment travelled in a one-ton lorry and the equipment included a portable fit-up, and a set of stage curtains. The use of curtains instead of built and painted scenery was, at that time, still a comparatively new idea, and, in the years following, the methods of the Arts League of Service were to have a wide influence on the rapidly growing amateur theatre movement. In an England impoverished by war, elaborate settings were no longer possible and the Travelling Theatre had proved that they were unnecessary.

When, in 1927, the National Festival of Community Drama was inaugurated by the British Drama League, the curtain setting came into its own. It was obvious that for Festival purposes conditions would have to be the same for all the groups entering and it became the rule that a surround of plain curtains should be provided at all centres to form a nucleus which would be embellished by such scenic pieces as the individual groups cared to bring with them.

Now it is a long time since 1927, and the unfortunate fact that in all these years the curtain setting has not improved by one single detail is as mystifying as it is exasperating. Mistakes of more than a quarter of a century ago are still made with maddening persistency, so that far from helping designers the curtains perpetually balk them. And yet there is nothing complicated about a sympathetic and comprehensive curtain set, though certain essential features must be borne in mind. First, we must have a good sky; whether a straight cloth or a cyclorama is used it must be flawless. It cannot be too large nor, in any amateur theatre that I have ever seen, can it be too far upstage. If the lighting conditions are good, the sky should be just off white. If it is blue, the colour changes possible by varying the light primaries will be limited.

Next, we need a traverse curtain up-stage, and, if the stage is deep enough, another one somewhere in the mid-way position. Side curtains should consist of separate strips or "legs" hung from small swivel battens so that they may be set in the up-and-down position (closing the sides and denoting indoors) or in the on-and-off position (allowing free entrance and exit at any point, and denoting outdoors).

The traverse curtains should not be made in two large sections as this arrangement will

allow of an opening only in the middle, whereas we may frequently need to run in an arch or door or window flat somewhere to the side. The traverses should therefore be made up of separate strips, no wider than the "legs" and these strips should be equipped with strong snap fasteners so that we can have either a straight run of material or an opening wherever we want it.

The tone of the curtains is of the utmost importance, and I am convinced that for all-purpose work they must be grey. Any colour will inevitably suggest a particular mood which, while helping some plays will hinder others, apart from clashing with the scheme a designer may have in mind. But there are greys and greys, and I am strongly in favour of a warm grey, with a suggestion of pink, like a seagull's back. The tone should relate to black and white precisely as middle C relates to the highest and lowest notes on the keyboard. Here we have a truly neutral ground against which all colours may be seen at their best. Grey curtains when we do see them are nearly always an octave too high in tone, which makes it impossible to darken a scene if we need to.

The simple equipment which I have suggested here will form a nucleus for the production of almost any play. It can be embellished with rostrums, steps, columns, arches, ground rows, cut-outs, and even realistic "flats". There need to be nothing incongruous about the use of flats in conjunction with curtains provided that the "marriage" is borne in mind by the designer, and that sudden changes in style or colour are avoided. For plays set in one scene only we may be as solid and as architectural as we like, but given a good curtain set and an inventive designer we can work any number of changes without inflicting intervals on the audience, and our choice of play is unrestricted.

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